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Bowling together makes democracy work?

Democracy depends on the participation of its citizens. Following Etzioni (1968), Verba and Nie (1972), Kaase and Marsh (1979) or Barber (1995), and others we are analyzing politics and polities of democracies by focusing especially on the participation aspect: Government by participation and government by discussion (Schmidt 2002). In doing so there is a long track record in social sciences asking for the right determinants for analyzing participation and democracy (van Deth 2009), i.e. looking at the structures of the political systems or the attitudes of the people. But where do people learn democracy? Do they learn it as Putnam (1993:176) suggests, in "singing groups and soccer clubs"? And are these small organizations really bringing together different social groups and social ranks in terms of learning democracy? While Putnam argues that cultural values, norms and socially generated trust and structures of social life like networks and clubs constitute organizational, behavioral and cultural layers of social capital, we are partly questioning this perspective. We argue that if people learn democracy, they do it where Putnam suggests them to do. We also suggest that whether people learn democracy or not is dependent on whom people are bowling with and where. Why? Because of one predominant trend in western civilizations: postmodernization (Featherstone 1991; Turner 1994; Inglehart 1998) of cultural and social life fos-

ters fragmentation and particularization of what Alfred Schütz called "Lebenswelt" (Life world) (Schütz/Luckmann 2003). According to Schütz, the Lebenswelt encompasses a specific (and individual) reservoir of experiences and knowledge, it is the place where citizens develop their interests, habits and attitudes. Therefor (political) interests are always culturalized interests. They are determined, and characterized by the specific horizon of experience, patterns of argumentation and conduct of living ("Lebensvollzug") in everyday life.

Considering this, we suggest that Life world becomes the core category for describing and analyzing subjective dimensions of political objectivity (reality) (Elias1978). At the same time, it is a vastly under-researched topic in contemporary approaches to political culture and democracy. This is even more puzzling, as it has high potential to explain phenomena contesting representative democracies. These are for example the disenchantment with politics (and political apathy) of large groups of society on the one hand and the rising of the "Wutbürger" (angry citizen) demanding for more participation throughout Europe (from the struggle of the miners in Central Spain to the opposition to infrastructural programs in Southern Germany). The argument is that, because of the dissolution of traditional life worlds and the multiplication of life concepts in postmodernity, societies become even more fragmented. In sum, the resulting heterogeneity of life worlds and lifestyles does have a strong impact on politics, the evaluation of the quality of democracy (Beetham et al 2008) and forms of participation. Depending on what kind of interests, values and reservoirs for action are salient in the respective life world people are more or less (or even not) interested in politics and concrete policies, and are more or less (or not) addressed by and in support of the polity. Thus, it makes a difference with whom you bowl in terms of culturalized political interests and behavior, as the Life world becomes the core category for describing and analyzing subjective dimensions of political objectivity. (Elias 1978). Hence in the paper, we suggests a conceptional enlargement of the research on democracy and participation along the following central questions, that will be addressed in a compre-

hensive qualitative and quantitative empirical study that we will conduct starting in summer 2013: Which Varieties of Life worlds can be identified?

Which themes and relations are relevant to them? Which policies and dimensions do matter?

How do these Life worlds influence the manner of political and social participation?

What kind of impact does the specific Lebenswelt have on the evaluation of the quality of democracy?